

the major factors contributing to the low 1970 median family income of \$6023 when compared to \$7182 for Chatham County and \$7554 for Lee County. With the state median family income in 1970 amounting to \$7774, the Johnston County figure of \$6023 is 22.5 percent under the state's.

The 1970 median family within Selma was \$5759; this is \$264 or 4.4 percent below that of the county, and \$2015 or 25.9 percent below the state's. The percentage of Selma families with incomes less than the poverty level is 27.0; for Johnston County it is 24.8, and for North Carolina it is 16.3.

One of the major contributing factors to the low median income is the educational level of the residents. Within Johnston County, 21.4 percent of the residents have the maximum of a high school education; in Selma, it is 19.4 percent (the state figure is 21.7 percent). The median school years completed is 9.9 for Johnston County, 9.0 for Selma, and 10.6 for the state.¹⁰

It is a well known fact a higher educated populus will earn more income over a life span. The Town of Selma ranks behind Johnston County and the state in both of the previously mentioned categories. Can this be changed? One recently completed study links increased education with a quality high school curriculum and the economic opportunities within the county.¹¹ From the economic perspective, the implications are that increased economic development will result in more people completing high school because of the demands of the locally based industry. A capital intensive industry needs higher educated workers who will naturally earn more and raise their (and the community's) standard of living.

One of the most significant facts about the economic situation in North Carolina is that its workers on the average earn less than their counterparts elsewhere. In March of 1973, the average wage paid amounted to only 73.4 percent of the national average and 93.0 percent of that prevailing in the southeastern states. To a certain extent, this is due to the concentration of labor-intensive, low skill types of manufacturing and a low level of unionization--though even unionized workers (except truckers) within North Carolina earn less than union employees elsewhere.¹²

While many explanations have been offered about this earning gap, perhaps none is quite as revealing as a recent study by the North Carolina Office of State Planning. This report concluded that the gap was attributable to two factors: (1) a tendency to concentrate on labor intensive low wage industries--accounting for about one-third of the earnings gap--; and (2) the tendency for workers in a given industry to be paid less than their counterparts in the rest of the country.¹³

A serious commitment to remedy some of these noted deficiencies can be a first step toward solving some of the employment deficiencies discussed. These factors should be kept in mind when seeking new industry for the county.